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*RI Department of Education  
in Collaboration with the  
RI Department of Health*

# **Violence Related Behaviors Health Risks Among Rhode Island Public High School Students 1997 and 2001**

This summary presents selected information on violence related behaviors that affect health risks among Rhode Island adolescents, based on results from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). The YRBS is an anonymous and voluntary survey conducted in alternate years among randomly selected samples of high school students in over 50 participating states, territories, and municipalities nationwide. The YRBS was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to monitor health-risk behaviors that contribute to the major causes of mortality, disease, injury, and other health and social problems among youth and adults in the United States.

During the spring of 1997 and 2001 the YRBS was administered to 1,528 and 1,396 randomly selected Rhode Island public school students, respectively, in grades 9 through 12. With response rates of 60% in 1997 and 63% in 2001, the results are representative of all public high school students statewide. Survey findings from both years can be used to make important inferences concerning health-risk behaviors within this population.

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## ***KEY FINDINGS***

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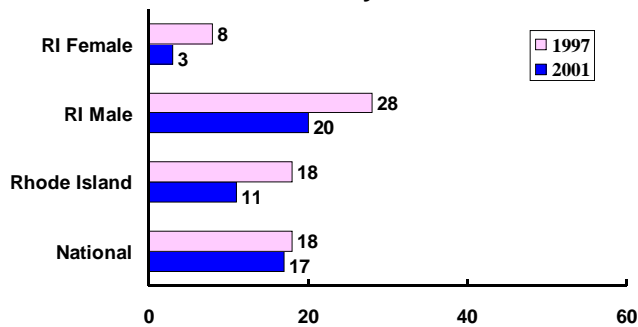
- ✓ There was a considerable drop in the percentage of Rhode Island students carrying any weapons between 1997 and 2001, from 18% to 11%. National figures remained in the 17%-18% range. Males were far more likely than females to carry weapons, with 20% of boys and 3% of girls reporting this behavior in 2001.
  - ✓ There was no change in the percentage of Rhode Island students carrying guns between the two time periods (5% in both 1997 and 2001). Males were more likely than females to carry guns in the 30 days prior to surveying; 8% of boys compared to only 1% of girls in 2001.
  - ✓ In 1997 and 2001, approximately one-third of students in Rhode Island and the United States were in a physical fight over the past year. Rhode Island Males had twice the rate of fighting as females in 2001 (41% versus 21%, respectively). The severity of their fighting was also greater, with a reported 8% of Rhode Island males needing medical attention after a fight, as compared to 4% of females in 2001.
  - ✓ 5% of Rhode Island students reported carrying a weapon on school property in 2001, which represented a slight decline from 1997. Males were much more likely than females to bring a weapon to school. 9% of students were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property in 2001, with males being twice as likely as females to have been threatened or injured (12% versus 6%, respectively). Fights on school property continued to be fairly prevalent in both survey periods, involving 18% of males and 7% of females in 2001.
  - ✓ 10% of Rhode Island students in 2001, both male and female, did not go to school on at least one of the 30 days prior to the survey because they felt unsafe. This is a fairly substantial increase over the 6% reported in 1997.
  - ✓ 9% of Rhode Island teenagers reported being physically hurt by their boyfriend or girlfriend at some point during the year, with males somewhat more likely than females to report being hurt on purpose. Forced sexual intercourse was reported by nearly the same proportion of males and females, with an overall rate of 8% at both the state and national levels in 2001.
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## Intentional Injuries - Violence Related Behaviors

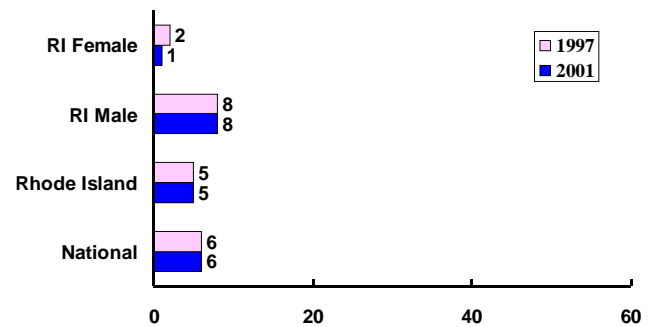
### *Risk Behavior:* Weapon Carrying

**Rationale:** Approximately nine out of ten homicide victims in the United States are killed with a weapon of some type, such as a gun, knife or club. Homicide is the second leading cause of death among all youth aged 15 to 19 and is the leading cause of death among black youth aged 15 to 19. Firearms markedly elevate the severity of the health consequences of violent behavior. In 1998, 82% of homicide victims 15 to 19 years old were killed with firearms.

Percentage of students who carried a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on one or more of the past 30 days



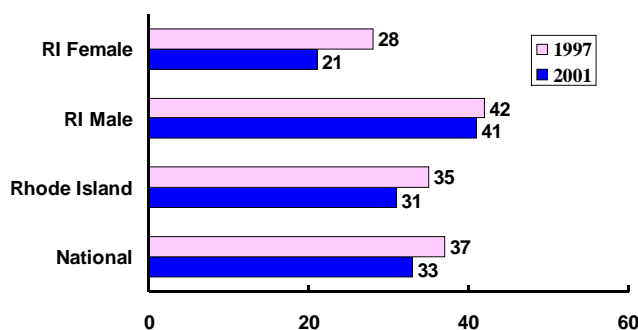
Percentage of students who carried a gun on one or more of the past 30 days



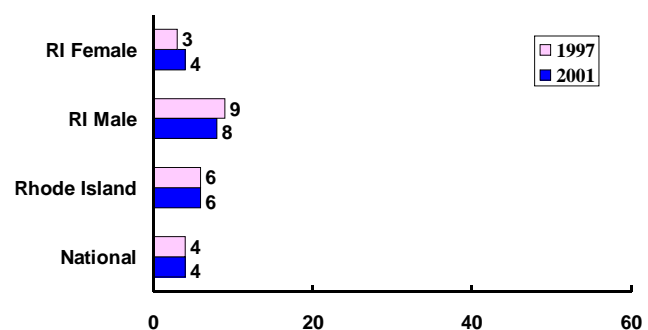
### *Risk Behavior:* Physical Fights

**Rationale:** Physical fighting is an antecedent for many fatal and nonfatal injuries.

Percentage of students who were in a physical fight one or more times during the past 12 months



Percentage of students who were injured in a physical fight one or more times during the past 12 months and had to be treated by a doctor or a nurse

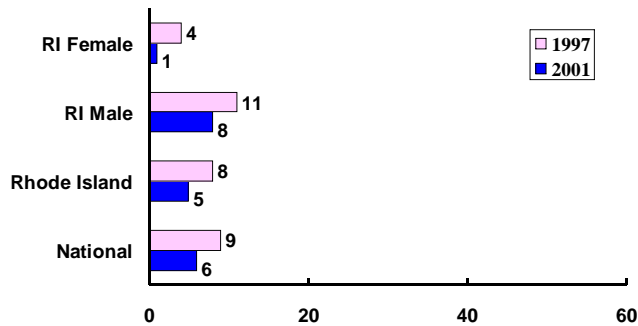


## Intentional Injuries - Violence Related Behaviors

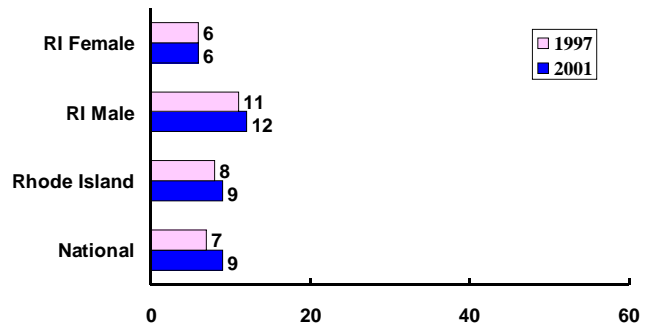
**Risk Behavior:** Violence on school property

**Rationale:** During 1999, students ages 12-18 were victims of 880,000 nonfatal violent crimes at school in the United States. In 1999, about 1.6 million thefts of student property occurred at school. Nearly 100% of school districts have a policy prohibiting weapon possession or use by high school students.

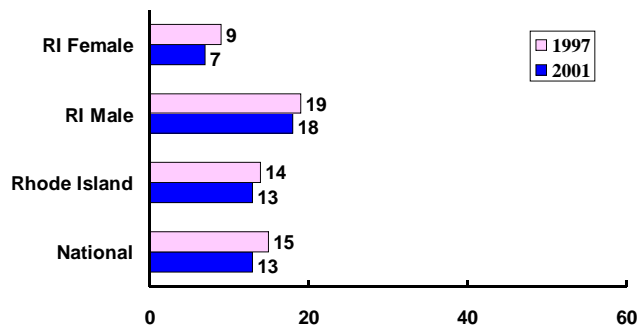
**Percentage of students who carried a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on school property on one or more of the past 30 days**



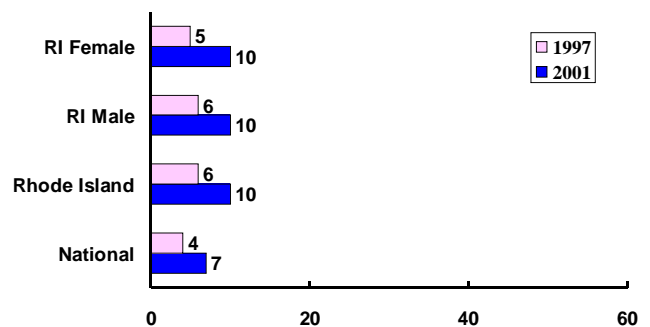
**Percentage of students who have been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property one or more times during the past 12 months**



**Percentage of students who were in a physical fight on school property one or more times during the past 12 months**



**Percentage of students who did not go to school on one or more of the past 30 days because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school**

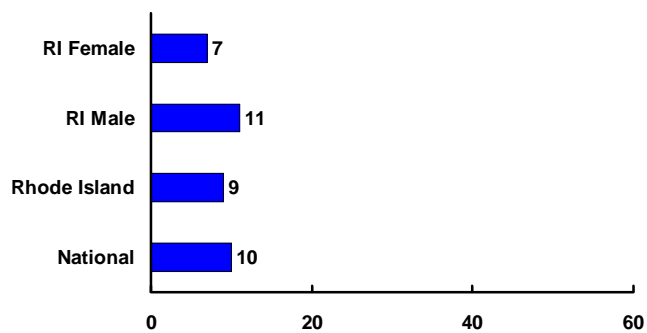


## Intentional Injuries - Violence Related Behaviors

**Risk Behavior:** Sexual Violence

**Rationale:** Forced sexual intercourse has been associated with increased risk of chronic diseases and other health problems.

Percentage of students who were ever hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend during the past 12 months – 2001 YRBS



Percentage of students who have ever been physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to – 2001 YRBS

